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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Tuesday, July 17, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Among the letters in our mailbag this morning is one from a lady who lives up on a mountain top -- or almost. During the past year she has moved to a farm in the Rockies -- altitude 6000 feet. And now she's having difficulties about canning at this height.

Well, if you were listening in one day last April, you may have heard a chat we had on mountain cookery. At that time we mentioned that most cookbooks, canning bulletins, and so on are planned for sea-level cooks rather than mountain cooks. So, many recipes that give perfect results in all places under 1000 feet aren't successful at higher altitudes. When you move to the mountains you have to adjust your recipes for cakes and muffins and popovers, for example. You have to boil your cake icings longer to make them "spin a thread." And you have to boil your vegetables longer to make them tender. Also you have to give your cans of fruit or tomatoes a longer bath in boiling water to be sure of sterilizing them. We won't go into all the technical whys and wherefores again today. Let's just remember the little verse a friend of mine composed on the subject:

"Boiling water's not so hot
Away up on the mountain top."

That's why you have to process your canned foods longer up on the mountain than down at the sea shore. Here's the rule to guide you in mountain canning: Increase your time of processing in the boiling-water bath twenty per cent for each additional 1000 feet of altitude. Now, suppose you want to can tomatoes at 6000 feet above sea level. The canning directions say, "Process quart and pint jars of tomatoes 45 minutes in the boiling water bath." Forty-five minutes in any place no higher than 1000 feet, that means. Twenty per cent of that forty-five minutes is nine. Add nine minutes to every extra thousand feet. Nine times five gives another forty-five minutes. So our friend living at 6000 feet will process her tomatoes an hour and a half instead of forty-five minutes.

Of course, the safety rule for canning holds up in the mountains as everywhere else. Only acid foods are safe processed in boiling water. Meats and all vegetables except tomatoes must be processed in the pressure canner. The mountain rule for pressure canning is: Increase your pressure one pound for each 2000-feet increase in elevation.

False notions about food keep on floating around in spite of all the scientists are doing to give us the true facts. Somebody once spread the rumor that you couldn't make good jelly with beet sugar. So every single summer housekeepers are sure to write and inquire whether their jelly will jell with beet sugar. Let's squelch this false idea. Cane and beet sugar are equally good for making fruit jelly. Choose the right kind of fruit to start out with and then follow reliable directions. You'll have no trouble.

One of our friends wants to know the secret of making peach preserves in which the fruit looks "full and transparent." She says when she tries to make peach preserves it cooks down into jam -- just a soft mass.

Well, the experts suggest that this lady probably isn't cooking the sirup thick enough before she puts in the fruit. Fruit will go to pieces cooked in water or in a thin sirup. But if you drop it in a thick sirup, the fruit holds its shape. You see, the fruit gives off its own juice and absorbs the sugar at the same time the sirup cooks down to a thickness that will preserve the fruit.

Now suppose you want to make the pieces of fruit extra plump. Let the mixture stand several hours or overnight in the kettle after you have cooked it. As the fruit stands, it will absorb even more of the sirup than it has during the cooking. In the morning, drain the fruit and reheat the juice. Put the fruit in sterilized jars and pour the hot juice over it. Then seal the jars.

While we're on the subject of preserving, let's mention one or two other important points. Since cooking in thick sugar sirup tends to make the cell walls of the fruit firm, naturally it helps the soft fruits hold their shape, but it may go too far with the firm fruits and actually toughen them. This won't happen with ripe peaches, but it may with fruit as solid as quinces, some apples and pears. If you are making preserves of one of these very firm fruits, better cook them in water, or steam them until tender and then put them in the sirup.

As for the very juicy fruits like berries, you'll probably have better results with them if you put them in the kettle with just sugar, rather than in sirup. After short cooking you'll have a thick sirup formed just from the sugar and the juice that comes out of the fruit.

Our grandmothers made many more preserves in their day than we do. Before people understood the process of canning, this method of preservation with a great deal of sugar was very important. Nowadays we count preserves and pickles as the extras, the little additions that give variety and interest to the winter menus. But the backbone of our pantry supply is always the canned foods -- fruits, vegetables and often home-canned meat.

Here's a washing-machine question. "How can I remove a green stain from my copper tub?" Answer: Rub with hot vinegar and salt, or with a solution of soapsuds and ammonia. Then rinse and wipe dry. Tarnish on all brass and copper utensils responds to a treatment with mild acid. Old-fashioned ways of brightening copper include rubbing with buttermilk, vinegar, tomato, rhubarb, tart apples, lemon rinds, and vinegar and salt. Or you can clean these metals with a friction cleaner like whiting paste or powdered rottenstone mixed with oil. To clean a badly tarnished piece of brass or copper, apply the vinegar and salt solution hot. Rub it well over the surface. Wash in hot soapy water. Rinse. Then polish with whiting and wipe dry with a clean cloth.